

The University of Chicago

THE THEOLOGICAL REACTIONS
OF THE VICTORIAN POETS TO
THE NATURAL SCIENCES
AND EVOLUTIONISM

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IN CANDIDACY
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
AND ETHICS

1932

By

ANDREW VANCE McCracken

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CHAPTER I

"A DARKLING PLAIN"

And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Conflicting alarms did distract Victorian England. The established social order was in a process of being recast. The traditional mores and patterns of behavior, the inherited mechanisms of social control were in an accelerated state of alteration. Public opinion, political and economic creeds, custom found themselves subject to a hurried modification. And yet paradoxically, we moderns think of the Victorians in terms of smugness, of decidedly conventional standards and Prince Albert coats.

The inherited religious faith was fast losing its historic prestige. In the eighteenth century it had been possible and altogether appropriate for an earnest German sculptor to represent the revered founder of Christianity as a most gentlemanly person adorned with a wig. But in the mid-decades of the nineteenth century, even the supernatural retreats of the Divine were being assailed. Truly Victorian life was being lived, as Matthew Arnold wrote, upon "a darkling plain," - a baffling, shifting world, lighted by flashes of a naive optimism, but a world in which powerful though obscure social forces tugged - eye resisted each other far below the surface wavelets that played in the sun.

A few of the prescient had possibly sensed the gathering storm. Developing interests and tendencies, long on the horizon, had been slowly assuming a threatening importance. By 1837, when Victoria came to the throne, these converging influences had not only altered, but had begun to create a wholly new environmental

complex to which adjustment of some sort had to be made. Grounded in the push and resistance of groups and individuals, these manifold pressures created tension situation out of which arose a totally new kind of culture, and along with it a changing system of religious thought - for the social organization has consistently been more than just the "milieu" in which religion has operated.

Religion has invariably been indebted to the social complex for more than just its color-tone. This has been particularly true of Christianity in the western world. When studied historically, the Christian movement is seen always to have been a phase of the social process and not, as frequently represented, an isolated and environmentally unrelated quantum of revealed truth. With very few exceptions, the changes that have taken place in religious dogma and practice have developed out of tension situations created by the impact of new intellectual, political and economic pressures upon the inherited and established system.

Western Christianity, quite contrary to a popular impression, has always been a part of the contemporary social structure and its mores. This has been its strength and, at the same time, its weakness. Christianity was not conceived and has not existed "in vacuo." And for this reason it has not for long remained static and unchanged. The social order has consistently furnished

the patterns for religious ideas and teachings. In all forms of thought analogy is the first means of getting intellectual unity. The history of religious thought is really the history of patterns by which religious behavior is shown to be rational.¹

Dean Shailer Mathews emphasizes the fact in his The Atonement and the Social Process and elsewhere that doctrinal formulae have been

¹Dean Shailer Mathews, "Social Patterns and the Idea of God," The Journal of Religion, April, 1931.

with few exceptions clothed in terms and analogies borrowed from the current social complex. And a close reading of the history of western Christianity indicates clearly that wherever and whenever in the western world decisive changes of the cultural environment have taken place, tension situations have arisen that have demanded a restatement of religious faith. Out of those tension situations, Christianity has emerged, re-expressing itself in an attempt to be intellectually respectable in the new culture.

Confusion and bewilderment have been inevitable in such periods. Few minds have been endowed with the capacity of making swift and radical, and at the same time, constructive adjustments in the serious matters of the soul. Most of us are conservative at this point, and then, too, there are always the decencies, the reservations that have to be taken into account. Every age in which the culture emphases have shifted has been characterized by mental stress and strain, anxious insecurity in the realm of the soul, compromising adjustments that in the end proved inadequate.

Such times turn life topsy-turvy with question marks. And Victorian England was just such a time.

The transitional process was neither sudden nor steady as often represented by naive Victorian optimism. Adjustments of such proportions - and the Victorian period was a day of colossal adjustments - are not swiftly consummated. Time is inexorably a part of any radical adjustment that has its sources afar off in the historic stream. Already in Victorian England, the inherited order had become so complex and stable, supported as it was by vast institutional and traditional controls, that change could not have been other than violent and slow. But the middle class, self-confident, vital with a new found enthusiasm, revelled in the

mechanical progress, the industrial developments, the multiplying wealth, their far-flung commerce, the hopes pregnant in the evolutionary hypothesis, and saw themselves well on the road to Utopia.

For these excessively confident spirits, the legend of Time was read with a smile and that which they read was "Rejoice."² But for the more cautious and thoughtful, the age was dark with grave misgivings.

It is a platitude to add that the slow but growing acceptance of the idea of evolution had far-reaching and momentous results in all fields of thought. It introduced, as Professor John Dewey has written, "a mode of thinking that in the end was bound to transform the logic of knowledge and hence the treatment of morals, politics and religion."³

The view of life prevailing immediately before the nineteenth century had quite consistently conceived the universe to be a reflection of a transcendent world that was ruled despotically by a sovereign God. Theology in that period had been what Dean Shailer Mathews has aptly called "a transcendentalized politics"⁴ for it had clothed itself in the patterns derived from the sociopolitical experience of the day.

But in the Victorian period, the theology that had borrowed its vocabulary and general formulae from the social patterns of a monarchical society was engaged in its death struggle. The political organization that supplied these categories had passed. And for the best informed, the traditional religion had lost its cogency

²The thought of this sentence was suggested by a line of verse written by Sir Lewis Morris and quoted by Alfred R. Wallace in The Wonderful Century, (Dodd, Mead and Company, 1898).

³John Dewey, Influences of Darwin on Philosophy and Other Essays, (Henry Holt, 1910).

⁴Shailer Mathews, The Atonement and the Social Process (Macmillan, 1930).

because of the shifts that had taken place in the political thought and organization. The Victorian mind was being increasingly controlled by the natural sciences. The evolutionary theory was fashioning new categories of thought, new intellectual patterns.

Slowly there had developed a confidence that human intelligence, guided by the newly fashioned scientific techniques, was capable of piercing to the essence of things and extracting all the understanding of the universe requisite for human living. Sense experience was slowly usurping the traditional role of the supernatural. The desire to know, to take control of the orderly processes of reality in the interest of human welfare had become quite widespread, as had the protest against the naive, supernaturalistic accounts of the ways of the universe inherited from the traditional thought. That all things were the work of an all-powerful, arbitrary God was not explanation enough.

Empirical knowledge was the "summum bonum" for the very critical Victorian. Already LaPlace had dispensed with the services of a Creator and had employed his nebular hypothesis to describe the process by which the world had evolved mechanically out of the primeval chaos. Lyell and Hutton had accounted for our planet in terms of physical laws alone and in such a way that the process fitted into the cosmic history of the universe. The "habits of matter" were traced and the "laws of order" were searched out as there developed a growing confidence in man's power to live by empirical knowledge alone. There appeared no need and indeed no way for man to reach out beyond the inexorable circle of his individual experience, experience defined in an arbitrarily limited sense. And this type of naturalism increasingly threatened the hitherto inviolable realm of theology, culminating, as it were, in the assertion of John Tyndall in 1874: -

....We claim, and we shall wrest, from theology, the entire domain of cosmological theory. All schemes and systems which thus infringe upon the domain of science, must, in so far as they do this, submit to its control and relinquish all thought of controlling it.⁵

Nowhere has this conflict between the new creative forces that were shaping men's thinking and the inherited religious system been more clearly portrayed than in the Victorian poetry.

Religion and poetry have long gone hand in hand. The poet has always possessed a peculiar sensitiveness to the problems that perplex the human mind, to the currents of movements that impinge upon the inner life, to the loftiest aspirations and the most tragic spiritual struggles of the heart. The mind of the poet has been a sensitive plate upon which the most subtle movements of the spirit register themselves.

As this new world of thought was dawning and before the impact of the scientific movement had been seriously felt, Wordsworth had confidently written that

The objects of the Poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings.....If the labours of Men of Science should ever create any material revolution direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then no more than at present.⁶

The men of science did create a revolution. The Victorian poets were on the scene of battle. What part did they play? Are we able to discern in their poetry their reactions, their religious adjustments? What were the theological implications of the natural sciences and evolutionism in the Victorian poetry?

⁵ Tyndall, Fragments of Science, "The Belfast Address."

⁶ Preface to the second edition of The Lyrical Ballads.

CHAPTER II

"EARTH FORLORN"

between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born.

Whenever and wherever men have been caught in tension situations created by the impact of the new set of conditions in which they live upon their traditional religious heritage, one of the most common of their reactions is the total abandonment of the old religious inheritance, its values, its assurances. But the past has a way of making its indelible impress and human nature being what it is, the attempts to break with the social heritage - to live without reference to the experienced values of the discarded - aside from their wisdom - have invariably resulted in a disillusioned skepticism, a tormenting doubt and a wistful yearning for the religious certainty that had once prevailed.

The Victorian stage was set for this very reaction. The universe of the victorians, as interpreted by the natural sciences and evolutionism, was becoming an objective affair, seemingly indifferent to human values and governed by iron laws. For a minority, at least, the basic lines of things had been drawn. Fundamentals had been established. Matter, energy, ether were known in broad outline as were the astronomical and geological processes. The labyrinthine journey from the amoeba to man had been boldly sketched and there seemed to remain for the future generations nothing more than to supply the more precise details by continued observation and experimentation.

A definite type of naturalism came into vogue - a naturalism based upon the physical sciences, refusing to carry philosophy

and thought beyond the limits of these sciences. Its major emphasis was upon the strictly mechanical character of the world process, employing the terms force and energy to designate the substantial ground of the universe. It is well to remember, however, for the sake of accuracy, that the naturalism of the nineteenth century, based entirely upon the natural sciences, was not the naturalism of our day which takes into account all of the sciences and particularly, the social and psychological.

The political pattern, hitherto operative in theology, no longer held full sway. A wholly new pattern, derived from the concept of evolutionism, was in the making.

The bewildered Clough spoke for the uncounted numbers of his own age as science and criticism were set in array against the out-moded theology. His poetry was the expression of a soul at debate with itself and the forces of life, of a mind divided and, at times, tired of questioning the object and end in living.

To spend uncounted years of pain,
Again, again and yet again,
In working out in heart and brain
 The problem of our being here;
To gather facts from far and near,
Upon the mind to hold them clear,
And, knowing more may yet appear,
Unto one's latest breath to fear,
The premature result to draw -
Is this the object, end, and law,
 And purpose of our being here?¹

Clough had lost the God, the religious faith of his younger days. At the same time, the poet had, so far as we can see, no training in the sciences. How much of the literature that led up to Darwin he had read we do not know - probably not much. If for the abandoned God of his early training he had been able to sub-

¹Clough, "Perche Pensa? Pensando S'Invecchia."

stitute Evolution, his life would probably have been characterized by the kind of assurance and integration we shall find toward the close of this chapter. Clough had no targeted enthusiasm, no supreme loyalty to which his reverent soul could give itself in total abandonment. And so his life was filled with deadly discords. He got nowhere. How often his readers wait expectantly for something to happen, for an adjustment to be consummated, as for instance in Dipsychus. But nothing comes of it all.

An intimate friend of Clough's was Matthew Arnold (1822-1888). Their lives and experiences were closely related. Schoolmates at Rugby and then together at Oxford, they had much in common - friendships, ideals, reactions. Arnold, too, knew the uncertainty of the age in which he lived and confessed himself to be

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.²

How worried Arnold was! How tormented in his doubts! He had so little upon which he could actually count. Science had wiped out the religious certitudes of his youth. And he, like his fellow-poet Clough, had found nothing to take this place. Follow Arnold in his "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" as slowly he rode "through forest, up the mountain-side" to the silent courts of the monastery on its Alpine heights, "where ghost-like in the deepening night cowl'd forms brushed by in gleaming white" and hear his sad answer as he stopped to ask what was he, that he was there in that place.

Tragedy is the most appropriate word I can summon for these lines. His "masters of the mind" had made impossible for him the

²"Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse," Arnold's Poetical Works (Oxford ed., 1922).

Christian certitude that had sustained his forbears. In itself, that would not necessarily have been tragic. What thoughtful man lives today who has not known the very same experience! But the tragedy lay in the fact that those "rigorous teachers" had substituted no other compelling, gripping faith, - nothing upon which Arnold could absolutely count, - nothing to which he could give himself in abandonment and complete devotion. Of course, there were the values of human organization and fellowship - and how modern that sounds. But Arnold was not too hopeful of these, for

in the sea of life enis!d
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live alone.

'betwixt their shores' lay
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.³

But it was the highest sustaining loyalty to which Arnold could give himself. Uncertain as it did seem to him, it was better than none.

Arnold was deeply sensitive to the storms and strains of his time. He felt the main movements of the day, their implications for the future. He accepted the scientific approach and pattern: knowledge was limited to the methods and techniques of the natural sciences as developed at his time; verifiable experience formed the outposts of all man could know; man was organically an inexorable part of the natural order; and as one expression of the central law of things, the all pervading spirit.

The development of thought that we have been tracing in this chapter reaches its culmination in Thomas Hardy. Hardy, born in 1840, lived in an atmosphere heavy with a cock-sure system of thought - a sort of mechanical philosophy - that had the unequal-

³Arnold, "To Marguerite."

ified backing of the natural sciences, speaking confidently and naively with an infallible authority. I dare say that nowhere in poetry has the inductive, empirical method of science been employed with more exactness, consistency and fearlessness than in Thomas Hardy.

The "Immanent Will" is a key-word to the thought of Hardy. Over and over again it emerges. At times the impersonal pronoun "It" is employed in its stead, - again the lifeless pronoun "That." "The Immanent Will" is all-embracing, all sustaining. Energy of an inherent and indivisible type is suggested by the phrase, implying, therefore, self-organization, self-development, self-sufficiency. The natural world and the human are not separable. They are one. The world of nature is not exterior to man. The same Will pervades all. "It" is the basis of all organization, the creative principle underlying and determining all natural and social process. Life, both individual and social, as well as that of nature is but a distributive aspect of the comprehending process. Schopenhauer!

The theory was in direct line with the evolutionary teaching of the day. Hardy did not arbitrarily separate man from nature as had been the practice. There was a oneness in the universe and Hardy set forth in his poetry and in his novels this essential nature of man as a product of the creative, germinative forces inherent in the very nature of the universe. Of course, the acceptance of this cosmic theory based upon evolutionism forced the poet to take cognizance of the ruthlessness, the "inhumanity" of nature, - her "unconscious not of essential laws, but of those laws framed merely as social expedients by humanity, without a basis in the heart of things" as the poet himself put it.

For other serious-minded men, this inconsistency of nature had forced them to abandon the monistic interpretation in favor of the dualistic or pluralistic. But to Monism the poet held true though he recognized clearly nature's "inhumanity" to her child, man.

CHAPTER III

"DREAMER OF DREAMS"

Let lore of all Theology
Be to thy soul what it can be:
But know, -that Power that fashions man
Measured not out thy little span
For thee to take the meting-rod
In turn, and so approve on God
Thy science of Theometry.

Prepare now to enter a world wholly different from that presented in the preceding chapter - a world of poetry in which the substantial present dissolved into dreams of the past - a poetry characterized by an extravagant presence of spiritual ecstasy, of an intense ardour that often exhausts the reader's emotions.

In the face of the crises between a traditional belief and the new revolutionary conditions of living, there have always been those who have become fixated upon an earlier cultural level - or better - who have found refuge in the patterns of a day before the new conflict situations had arisen. And such were the Pre-Raphaelites. Their verse provided an escape, or more accurately, expressed their escape from the turmoil and disturbances of the mid-decades.

The Pre-Raphaelites went back to the Middle Ages, or to some period of simple and familiar reactions for a type of expres-

sion untouched by the contemporary questionings. The doubts that fought without cessation in the mind and heart of Clough - the theological worriments that tossed the confused Arnold as upon a storm-swept sea - the unfriendly mechanistic universe that hemmed in the poet Hardy did not interest the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and those spirits identified with the romantic revival of the middle nineteenth century. They lived apart from it, beyond it in an atmosphere charged with symbolism and mysticism.

Conceptual knowledge - the product of the infant natural sciences - was for them entirely unsatisfying. It touched no more than the superficial aspects of life, the periphery of their deepest interests. Intuitive knowledge, a faculty employed by the mystics of all ages, constituted for the Pre-Raphaelites the only trustworthy and reliable guide.

Who were the Pre-Raphaelites singing lines of verse so unlike that of Clough, Arnold and Hardy? Pre-Raphaelitism was built around Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82), and associated with him at the founding of the Brotherhood were John Everett Millais, William Michael Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, Frederick George Stephens, Charles Collinson and Thomas Woolner. An earlier Pre-Raphaelite group had existed, which, following its expulsion from the Vienna Academy in 1810, had been established in a deserted Franciscan convent at Rome under the leadership of Overbeck, but with this movement we are not concerned. Of the Brotherhood founded in 1848, Dante Gabriel Rossetti was the moving spirit and the figure which has achieved the greatest prominence.

Living in an age disturbed by doubt, dominated by the too hasty conclusions of an immature science, in an age which expressed itself in an art controlled by pseudo-classicism, the Pre-Raphael-

ites sought their inspiration in the age preceding Raphael in which life and art were simple, sincere and spiritually naive. And one immediate objective was the restoration of this spirit which had all but perished in the mid-decades of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER IV

"IMPENETRABLE TRACTS"

And if there is a god beyond our thought
(How could he be within its compass brought?)

The Pre-Raphaelites fled from the embattled forces of their milieu with its socio-psychic pressures, but the social complex was such that it challenged with fundamental questions those "of the sighting brain."

Was there a Divine Being who found his self-expression in the labyrinthine procession of growth and development portrayed by evolutionism? Was there resident in this boundless and mysterious universe an Intelligent Mind? These were burning questions which some men could not escape. Answers were varied.

The natural sciences had led men to believe that they promised all knowledge. Ironically, they had revealed the impossibility of knowledge! The inherited scale of values had been overthrown. The traditional religious systems were conceived in increasing quarters as no more than poetic fiction. Souls had been set adrift.

Man lived no longer at the focal point of the universe. Earth was not the center of the cosmic realms. It possessed no monopoly on the divine solicitude, if any there was. Man,

himself, lost his theological significance and took on the biological. He did not stand separate from the animal kingdom, but had become a member of it. He was the dominant and most advanced animal - no more. Tradition had led the devout to believe that the material universe had been provided for the welfare of mankind. But the natural sciences reduced it to an arena of struggle for existence.

The poet of the nineteenth century whose verse has been popularly associated with the Agnostic movement and its related Epicureanism, was Edward FitzGerald, best known by his Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. FitzGerald (1809-1883) was a most eccentric man of genius, living a peaceful life far removed from the cross-currents of social and industrial England.

Although living a languid existence in life's more aloof circles, "old Fitz," as Thackeray and others loved to call him, was not unacquainted with the contemporary scientific and philosophical speculations.

And so to the wine-jar Omar went, representative of many living in FitzGerald's day, to drown the awfulness of his plight, to forget the misery and bewilderment of his existence and to have revived the compensating memories that filled the heart with sweetness. Their experience was not unlike that of the author of Ecclesiastes, who, too, had known the dark burden of life, the deceiving shadows that flitted across the path of mortal existence. Vanity - everything seemed to crumble as unnumbered souls walked in the valley of darkness to death. As FitzGerald wrote to Laurence, a friend, in 1877: "It is a desperate sort of thing, unfortunately at the bottom of thinking men's minds."

Toward the end of the century, there arose a group of poets, John Davidson (1857-1909) among them, who reacted violently

to the mid-Victorian literature, describing it as complacent, mild and narrow.¹

In London poetry of Davidson, the materialistic philosophy, couched in chemical terminology, took positive form. By this time, the influence of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer became pronounced and so, as in "Mammon and His Message," the universe was presented as all one substance, an integration of chemical constituents. There was no other world for Davidson. There was nothing immaterial. Man was the noblest expression of the self-conscious material order and the strongest man, the most aggressive was the highest. Sin, God, immortality, - who knew anything of them? The chemical constituents of the universe possessed the power of memory and a dim sort of consciousness of their state before their incarnation in man. It was this consciousness inherent in the elements that had led man to the conceptions of Hell, Heaven and God. Davidson had to have a world that was in harmony with the nature of things as revealed by the natural sciences.

God, immortality, the soul were more than just unknowable. Denial crept into his mind and heart. He went farther than Henley and those poets we have considered so far in this chapter. And so, depressed, and, I fancy, bewildered, John Davidson, in mid-life, faced to the open sea, his feet bathed in the laughing waters and directed a shot of lead into his tired brain.

¹See Hayim Fineman, John Davidson (Philadelphia, 1916), for a study of the relation of Davidson's ideas to his poetry; also R. M. Olson, John Davidson (Chicago, 1927), for a study of the poetry.

CHAPTER V

"THE GRAND PERHAPS"

God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world.

We have witnessed a discordant perplexity of emotions and thought in the poetry which reflected the workings of the protean Victorian mind. There was the dull despair of those groping hearts on "the sunless gulfs of doubt" and their sad, wistful yearning for the assurances lost. We have heard the ecstatic song of those who turned back to the simplicities of a day which knew not the clash of nineteenth century forces, who escaped the conflict of mind and heart which wore down the strength of their contemporaries. We have listened to the gay but hollow laughter of men who discerned no meaning in the "sorry scheme of Things" and so abandoned themselves to "the Cypress-slender Minister of Wine," perchance, to forget and to dream. How tragic were those lives as they groped in "the darkness of the pall" with black silence the only answer to their questioning cries for light!

Why was it so? It seems inevitable! Men have always reacted along somewhat similar lines in clashes between the inherited and new patterns.

But the Victorian difficulty was enhanced because the new pattern in which men were beginning to think was derived wholly from the physical sciences. It was not adequate to deal with phenomena other than the physical. The materials of the new sciences were those forces observed in the natural processes, and it was not long before the theory of the correlation of these activities was quite generally accepted. When uncritically applied to life and mind, as it was, this theory led directly into Materialism and

raised serious questions as to the existence of the God-spirit and as to whether human life was anything more than the result of an accidental collocation of material forces.

Scientific methodology was being haltingly applied to the social relationships of man, and even today sociology has not been granted the full status of a science by the physical scientists. Psychologists are likewise dismissed in the same quarter with a smile because they deal with data other than the physical. The data in the area of human reactions are so infinitely more complex than those pertaining to physical phenomena that progress will be exceedingly slow.¹

As for a scientific theology - shade of our ancestors! Although theological seminaries are today granting degrees In Scientia Theologica, scientific methodology has progressed little farther than to scratch the surface of the major objects experienced in worship and prayer. The datum of the religious experience is so much more complex than that of beetles and vegetables. In the nineteenth century, it was still held, as we shall see in the poetry reviewed in this chapter, that man had been fashioned with one sense to know the mineral constituents of plants and a wholly different one - intuition, faith, love - for the knowing of God. It has been only recently that progress has been made in subjecting the material of the religious experience to scientific scrutiny. And a long sea mile is yet to be travelled.

However, there were two poets who did make an attempt to preserve the values of the traditional religious thought and experience in the categories and patterns furnished by the natural sciences. Together, they performed herculean service in the sus-

¹See Henry Nelson Wieman, Religious Experience and Scientific Method, (Macmillan, 1927) for a complete discussion of this relationship between science and religion.

taining of men's Christian faith in those days of distress.

The lives of Tennyson (1809-92) and Browning (1812-89) almost spanned the period in which we are interested.

Tennyson's position was essentially that of Kant as it had come down through Jacobi, Hamilton and Mansell. Kant held that knowledge was possible, of course, but it was a knowledge of phenomena alone. We know things as they present themselves to us and consequently our knowledge is subjective. Das Ding an sich could never be known. It was beyond the reach of human knowability. Knowledge is of reality as it appears to man, not of reality as it actually is. But there was another aspect of mind, Kant argued, other than that of "Reason" or "Understanding." It was the "Practical Reason," and "Intuitive Reason," or "Faith" and through this function of the mind, reality was accessible.

Tennyson held the same position in its essentials. For him, knowledge dealt with the phenomenal and faith with the noumenal. Faith transcended knowledge, for the latter, in the mind of Tennyson, was confined to the objects of sense. The prologue of "In Memoriam," written after the poem was completed, summed up his thought on the distinction between knowledge and faith. It culminated in a form of agnosticism not unlike that of Herbert Spencer with his Inscrutable Reality.

Tennyson performed a priestly function for the troubled minds of his day. Materialism, agnosticism, pessimism were rampant. The natural sciences had befuddled men's minds. They groped for certitudes and thought those securities lay in the beliefs of the ancient pattern. Tennyson, well acquainted with the sciences but not always understanding them, attempted to minister to their need. He wrote to serve man. His art was primarily for man's sake and not that of art. Was there a God? Could there be a future life? Was man free? These were mooted questions and Tennyson strove

diligently to shed light upon them. He gave his answer and it was written in faith.

In the very year in which Darwin, a young man of twenty-six years, was collecting curious data in the neighborhood of Valparaiso on the "Beagle," Robert Browning published his "Paracelsus," in which he gave his evolutionary theory of the growth from the original protoplasmic self-consciousness through long vistas of time to man, the consummate creation. The outline boldly foreshadowed the theory later developed in detail by Darwin and Wallace.

Browning, though believing in evolutionism, did not at all times agree with the evolutionists. Toward the close of his life, his disagreement became so pointed as to be almost a rejection of the theory. The point of difference lay in the fact that the scientists after Darwin seemed to Browning to be concerned chiefly with the base origins of human personality and not with those spiritual aspects in which he was primarily concerned. The scientists seemed to be leaving out the moral consciousness, the purpose, the premeditated goal.

It was a heroic gospel Browning sang. How different in spirit from most of the contemporary verse. Browning served his generation in the capacity of spiritual advisor. Aware of and ministering to men's confused emotions and highest aspirations, he condemned their compromises and urged them on to courageous living as they groped their way through the long wildernesses.

But there remained a colossal difficulty that had to be faced - that of evil and its reality. The cause of the problem is clear. Browning banked everything on the goodness, the loving nature of his omnipotent God. His entire system revolved around this central conviction. And yet ghastly suffering did exist. Evil was in the saddle. How was its existence to be reconciled with a loving

God in a monistic universe? Was not evil inconsistent in a universe directed by a God of love? The problem was real. And this apparent inconsistency has always embarrassed monistic idealism.

Browning did not compromise. He denied neither God nor man. Denial of his God of love would have been unthinkable. To have compromised on the moral freedom of man in the attainment of perfection would have negated his entire system. For the doctrine

that man is hurled
From change to change unceasingly
His soul's wings never furled.²

was fundamental to his entire position.

Ignorance was an instrument of a divine plan which man could not comprehend. Defective knowledge possessed moral significance. Delusion lent itself to the building up of a moral life and, for Browning, it was the moral consciousness that reveals God, that made impossible for man the completed life which the whole evolutionary process suggested as the goal. Ignorance played an important role in his theory of a loving, all-powerful God. Man was destined to possess little knowledge:

Ignorance overwraps his moral sense,
Winds him about, relaxing, as it wraps,
So much and no more than lets through perhaps
The murmured knowledge - "Ignorance exists."³

Such was Browning's solution of the problem of evil in a monistic universe operated on the principle of love. The solution was an aspect of his general theory of knowledge.⁴ In revolt against the claims - presumptuous claims to the mind of Browning - of the scientists, all knowledge was distrusted, with the exception of a sort of subjective knowledge.

²Browning, Poems.

³Browning, "With Francis Furini," ix (among the "Parleyings with Certain Persons...."), Complete Poetic and Dramatic Works, Cambridge edition.

⁴Henry Jones, Browning as a Philosopher and Religious Teacher (James Maclehose & Sons, 1892), Chapter IX.

